

**THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL: ENCLOSED SETTINGS IN ROMAN
POLANSKI'S APARTMENT TRILOGY**

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Estella Dieci

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**THE PERSONAL IS POLITICAL: ENCLOSED SETTINGS IN ROMAN
POLANSKI'S APARTMENT TRILOGY**

Approved by:

Dr. Gregory Zinman, Advisor
School of Literature, Media, and Communication
Georgia Institute of Technology

Dr. Tobias Wilson-Bates, Faculty Reader
School of Literature, Media, and Communication
Georgia Institute of Technology

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SUMMARY

This paper examines enclosed settings in Roman Polanski's Apartment Trilogy, comprising *Repulsion* (1965), *Rosemary's Baby* (1968), and *The Tenant* (1976). In each of these films, Polanski illuminates the protagonists' lack of autonomy through repeated violation of their personal space in enclosed, domestic settings. The Apartment Trilogy was released amidst the second-wave feminist movement and features feminine protagonists who push against the patriarchal society in which they find themselves. These women are portrayed as delusional and in need of protection, and they find themselves struggling against their own homes, which progressively become uncanny. It is through this struggle that the viewers see the protagonists slowly succumb to the pressures of the patriarchal order they challenge

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The films in Polanski's Apartment Trilogy were released between 1965 and 1976, a decade characterized in part by second-wave feminism. The apartments of the Apartment Trilogy, where these films were primarily set, do not protect the protagonists from the patriarchal world outside their homes. *Repulsion*'s Carole (Catherine Deneuve) isolates herself to avoid men, but cannot seem to escape. Rosemary (Mia Farrow) of *Rosemary's Baby* is unable to keep her conspiring neighbors out of her apartment, and her attempts to escape are likewise futile. In *The Tenant*, Trelovsky (Roman Polanski) is similarly unable to avoid his critical neighbors. In all three films, the apartments become *unheimlich*¹ and the experiences of Carole, Rosemary, and Trelovsky with respect to the architectural uncanny imply a reassertion of the patriarchy under threat by second-wave feminism.

Previous work has speculated upon the significance of the Apartment Trilogy. The films are categorized as a critique on urban living as well as speaking to women's fears of patriarchal control². The way in which each film is shot places the audience member into the shoes of the lead character.³ Setting and architectural space aid in understanding of the films.⁴ *Repulsion* and *The Tenant* are tied to feminist critiques of films that depict women as mentally ill.⁵

This paper synthesizes prior work and argues that the architectural uncanny depicted in these films symbolizes control asserted over disenfranchised members of society by patriarchy. This symbolism was significant when the films were released because it suggests an intent to put women in their place in a decade of burgeoning rights and autonomy for women. In recent years, questions of how filmmakers' identities intersect with their subject matter, whether men can

¹ *Heimlich* is a German word to describe something that is "homely" and *unheimlich* is its antecedent "not home-like." Freud uses these terms to describe the uncanny in his 1919 essay "The 'uncanny.'"

² Renée, V. "Paranoia and Control: Explaining the True Horrors of 'Rosemary's Baby.'" *No Film School*, 2016.

³ McCullough, Susannah Bragg. *Rosemary's Baby Explained: Realism & Control*. ScreenPrism. 2016.

⁴ Shonfield, Katherine. "The use of fiction to interpret architecture and urban space." *The Journal of Architecture* 5, no. 4 (2000): 369-389.

⁵ Caputo, Davide. *Polanski and Perception: The Psychology of Seeing and the Cinema of Roman Polanski*. Intellect, 2012.

accurately depict women, and whether to attach the art to the artist have entered cultural, mainstream discussion.⁶ Polanski is highly relevant to this discourse, making his Apartment Trilogy an appropriate case study today.

This paper is structured as follows: it begins with a Materials and Methods section that defines key terms and outlines the methodology used for analysis, follows with a Literature Review which synthesizes prior theory and empirical work on this subject, proceeds with a Results section, and concludes with Discussion and Future Work sections that place these findings in today's context.

⁶ A 2017 TCM spotlight on films that not only featured female stars, but specifically females who contributed to the industry and production. See: Doll, Susan. "Molly Haskell on the Image of Women in the Movies". Streamline: The Filmstruck Blog. October 17, 2016. Date Accessed: November 19, 2018.
<http://streamline.filmstruck.com/2016/10/17/molly-haskell-on-the-image-of-women-in-the-movies/>

CHAPTER 2

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Materials

Definitions

- The Other refers to an individual who is alienated/marginalized.⁷
- The Uncanny is used to describe that which is opposite of familiar.⁸
- The Patriarchy is the system that upholds the dominance and authority of men.⁹

Assumptions

1. *Repulsion* and *The Tenant* feature schizophrenic protagonists.¹⁰
2. The protagonist of each film comprising the Apartment Trilogy is an Other.

Methods

I combine research on architecture with established approaches to film criticism, mostly:

- Feminist critique concerns the role of patriarchy in the representation of women in film.
- Contextualist critique refers to the larger climate surrounding the film.
- Psychological critique looks for patterns that are inspired by prominent psychologists.

Here, I draw on such psychologists as Sigmund Freud, Ernst Jentsch, and Laura Mulvey.

This paper focuses explicitly on the way in which enclosed spaces uphold patriarchy in the Apartment Trilogy. There are other interesting dimensions which I do not comment on in order to control the scope, most notably the protagonist's sexualities and their statuses as foreigners.¹¹

⁷ Eadie, Bruce. *The Fontana dictionary of modern thought*. Edited by Alan Bullock, Oliver Stallybrass, and Stephen Trombley. London: Collins, 1977.

⁸ Jentsch, Ernst. "On the psychology of the uncanny (1906)." *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 2.1 (1997): 7-16; ; Freud, Sigmund. "The 'uncanny'. Standard Edition (Vol. 17, Pp. 218-256)." 1919.

⁹ Eadie (1977), page 632.

¹⁰ Polanski, Roman. *Roman*. Pan Books, 1985; Polanski, Roman. *Roman Polanski: Interviews*. Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2005.

¹¹ Caputo's *Polanski and Perception* (2012) is an excellent resource for these dimensions of the film.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper argues that enclosed, domestic space in the Apartment Trilogy embodies the control exerted over disenfranchised characters by patriarchy. The argument is informed by the following research: the historical and cultural context of the time period in which these films were released, the history of feminist theory in film, and theories of architecture and narrative space, especially pertaining to the home. Psychological theory informs feminist theory, particularly theory about the presentation of women on-screen and directorial intent, and informs research on architecture, especially the architectural uncanny.

Historical and Cultural Context

Each film in Roman Polanski's Apartment Trilogy was released during the span of second-wave feminism. Second-wave feminism brought to light issues of sex and reproductive rights. The Cold War, the space race, the Vietnam War, and race riots and marches also contributed to the political climate of the time period.¹² This period was marked by immense social change and disillusionment with the status quo.

Second-wave feminist theory originated with Simone De Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*, published in France in 1949. In the introduction of *The Second Sex*, De Beauvoir claims that men are considered the default in society, while women exist as Others.¹³ In 1961, the oral contraceptive pill became available. Marital rape was not outlawed in all states until 1963, the same year the Equal Pay Act was passed and that Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* was published in the United States. De Beauvoir's feminist theory was expanded upon by Friedan, who links the widespread unhappiness of women to their automatically placed roles in the domestic sphere in society.¹⁴ In 1970, Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* introduced the use of the

¹² Berenstein, Rohna. "Mommie Dearest: Aliens, Rosemary's Baby and Mothering." *The Journal of Popular Culture*, vol.24, no.2. 1990. 56.

¹³ De Beauvoir, Simone, and Howard Madison Parshley. "The second sex." (1953)

¹⁴ Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. 1963.

term patriarchy as a formal system of social structures that oppress and exploit women.¹⁵ In the words of Laura Mulvey, patriarchy characterizes woman as “bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning.”¹⁶ Finally, in 1978, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act was passed. These facts are relevant to this research because my analysis of the Apartment Trilogy situates the films in second-wave feminism, using this context as a springboard for wider assertions and conclusions.

Feminist Theory in Film

In the 1970s, feminist film theory emerged in response to second-wave feminism. In 1973, Mulvey argues that psychoanalytic theory is a political weapon “demonstrating the way the unconscious of patriarchal society has structured film form.”¹⁷ She believes that “women, whose image has continually been stolen and used for this end, cannot view the decline of the traditional film form with anything much more than sentimental regret.”¹⁸ In 1974, Molly Haskell published *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies*, in which she compares the lives of women in real-life to the portrayal of women in Hollywood films.¹⁹ *Repulsion* was released in 1964, *Rosemary’s Baby* in 1969, and *The Tenant* in 1973, precisely when DeBeauvoir, Friedan, Mulvey, and Haskell were the authorities on women’s issues in life and film.

Since the 1960’s, film has increasingly invaded and speculated upon personal realms such as family dynamics within the classic nuclear family. When the personal, familial sphere is invaded, societal archetypes are exposed. When such archetypes are broken, the patriarchy itself is threatened.²⁰ Women being stereotyped as peaceful and innocent has been a manipulative mechanism to control and inhibit them.²¹ However, many film scholars have observed that

¹⁵ Wilson, Ara. “Patriarchy: Feminist Theory.” *Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women: Global Women’s Issues and Knowledge*. New York, 2000. 1493-1494.

¹⁶ Mulvey, Laura. “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema.” *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Springer, 1989. 15.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 14.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 26.

¹⁹ Haskell, Molly. *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies*. Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1974.

²⁰ Penley, Constance. *Close Encounters: Film, Feminism, and Science Fiction*, (U of Minnesota Press, 1991), 3-15.

²¹ Chaudhuri, Shohini. *Feminist Film Theorists: Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Teresa De Lauretis, Barbara Creed*. Routledge, 2006. 102.

mental illness and women's sexuality are frequently aligned – on screen and off.²² In film noir, women who are in more prominent roles tend to have tragic flaws, or the films themselves ends in tragedy.²³ This is problematic because “no matter what the specific diagnosis, to discuss mental illness in women is to discuss the inherent nature of female identity and what it means to be a woman in the patriarchal structure.”²⁴ Barbara Creed asserts that in particular, “schizophrenia is readily assimilated to female behaviour”²⁵ and goes on to explain that “it is this stereotype of feminine evil - beautiful on the outside/corrupt within - that is so popular within patriarchal discourses about woman's evil nature.”²⁶ This idea is relevant to the Apartment Trilogy in that both *Repulsion* and *The Tenant* concern schizophrenic protagonists.

Early feminist film theory “focused on the study and critique of ‘images of women’ i.e. the ‘positive or ‘negative’ portrayals of female characters, the provision of ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ role models for female viewers, etc” and became “greatly concerned with the exploration of the manner in which the notion Woman comes to signify various contradictory and reified meanings (e.g. virgin/whore, mother/spinster, wife/mistress)” in the 1970s.²⁷

Over time, feminist film critics began to speculate on the horror genre specifically.²⁸ Creed believes “horror emerges from the fact that woman has broken with her proper feminine role.” Cynthia Freeland states the purpose of feminist film theory: to analyze “a film's presentation of certain naturalized messages about gender-messages that the film takes for granted and expects its audience to agree with and accept.” She concedes that horror films often reinforce the norm of a sadistic male viewer and a passive female object. However, she suggests that horror is at times be feminist in nature because it shows women as monstrous and capable of

²² Gibson, Suzie. “Assertive Female Sexuality Is Pathologised Time and Again.” *The Conversation*. The Conversation, 11 Nov. 2014.

²³ Blaser, John and S. “No Place for a Woman: The Family in Film Noir.” *Film noir studies*. 1996.

²⁴ Kretschmar, Kelly. *Framing Femininity as Insanity: Representations of Mental Illness in Women in Post-Classical Hollywood*. University of North Texas, 2007. 90.

²⁵ Creed, Barbara. *The Monstrous-Feminine: Film, Feminism, Psychoanalysis*. Psychology Press, 1993. 4.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 42.

²⁷ Berenstein (1990), 59.

²⁸ See also: Modleski, Tania. “The terror of pleasure: The contemporary horror film and postmodern theory.” (1984).

castrating men rather than as mere victims, such as in *Fatal Attraction* (1987) which features a female killer.²⁹ As such, the genre often exists outside of the patriarchal order by breaking the social norm. This paper leans heavily on feminist film criticism in its analysis of the presentation of the patriarchy and the lack of autonomy of the protagonists in the films.

Architecture and Narrative Space

Research suggests that architecture is a strong metaphor for displaying and enforcing various ideologies both in film and in real life. For instance, over time, cultural perceptions of the house and what it has signified have changed. In *Poetics of Space*, published first in 1958, Gaston Bachelard describes the house as a place of safety, “the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace.”³⁰ Historically, the house is associated with femininity. In 1977, Olivier Marc speaks of the house as being analogous to the body in *Psychology of the House*.³¹ The house “has generally been conceived of as female, domestic space...as a maternal construct of nurturing and protection...”³² Eventually, and coinciding with the modernist movement, these ideas changed. In Witold Rybczynski's *Home: A Short History of an Idea* (1987), he writes:

“During the six years of my [modernist] architectural education the subject of [bodily] comfort was mentioned only once... It was a curious omission from an otherwise rigorous curriculum; one would have thought that comfort was a crucial issue in preparing for the architectural profession, like Justice in law, or health in medicine.”³³

The modern house “is not home to the feminine; the organic body; not to nature; the ‘primitive’; not to childlike spontaneity; not to fluidity or formlessness.” Instead, the modern house “frames the father.”³⁴

²⁹ Freeland, Cynthia A. “Feminist Frameworks for Horror Films.” *Film theory & criticism*. 1996. 627-648.

³⁰ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. The Orion Press, 1964. 6.

³¹ Marc, Olivier. *Psychology of the House: With 111 Illustrations*. Thames and Hudson, 1977.

³² Triggs Riley Grant. “Reel Houses of Horror: Film, Body and Architecture.” Rice University, 2006. 24.

³³ Rybczynski, Witold. *Home: A Short History of an Idea*. Penguin New York, 1987.

³⁴ Schmidt, Leoni. “Psychological Aspects of Space: House, Psyche and Body,” *South African Journal of Art History*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2001, 106.

In 1992, Anthony Vidler published *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*, in which “the house is framed as an estranging, dangerous place for the body, as a site of anxiety.”³⁵ Vidler introduces his interpretation of this reading by discussing Freud's 1919 essay “The ‘uncanny.’” He asserts that “the ‘uncanny’ is, in its aesthetic dimension, a representation of a mental state of projection that precisely elides the boundaries of the real and the unreal in order to provoke a disturbing ambiguity, a slippage between waking and dreaming.”³⁶

Further discussion on the uncanny in architecture ensues: “this melodramatic return of the repressed is registered not only in the becoming-monstrous of the figures but also in the becoming-hysterical of the interiors.”³⁷ Vidler writes, “as a concept, then, the uncanny has... found its metaphorical home in architecture: first in the house, haunted or not, that pretends to afford the utmost security while opening itself to the secret intrusion of terror.”³⁸

More recent research on the use of architecture in narrative demonstrates that the home “can also be seen as a place of entrapment of women.”³⁹ Women are trapped in “the architecture—both the houses and institutions—of patriarchy.”⁴⁰ Shonfield uses examples from world history to detail the various ways that architecture and urban space can inform ideology and extends this observation to fiction in order to suggest that architecture and urban space are also representative of themes and ideologies in film.⁴¹ Placing importance on theories of domestic space and understanding the architectural uncanny is pertinent to the argument of this paper, and this research will appear throughout.

Recap

An examination of the enclosed spaces of Polanski’s Apartment Trilogy will demonstrate that enclosed spaces are revealing of the pervasiveness of the patriarchy in the cultural climate

³⁵ *Ibid*, 107.

³⁶ Vidler, Anthony. *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely*. MIT Press, 1992. 11.

³⁷ Foster, Hal. *Compulsive Beauty*. MIT Press, Cambridge, 1993. 176.

³⁸ Vidler (1993), 11.

³⁹ Triggs (2006), 24.

⁴⁰ Gilbert, Sandra and Gubar, Susan. *The Madwoman in the Attic*. 1979.

⁴¹ Shonfield (2000).

they depict. This is supported by the historical and cultural background surrounding the films, feminist theory, and research on architecture. The historical background helps contextualize the films, feminist theory aids the analysis of the presence of patriarchy in the films, and research on architecture demonstrates the architectural uncanny in the Apartment Trilogy.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

In the Apartment Trilogy, there is constant interaction between architecture and person; the emotions of the protagonists are embodied by the architecture itself. Freud's essay on "The Uncanny" suggests that there is a psychological origin for the specific fear "generated by the kind of haunted, uncanny space represented in this film... an important aspect of this fear lies in the fact that a presumably familiar, homey space has been transformed into its opposite."⁴² An examination of the enclosed spaces of Polanski's Apartment Trilogy reveals that enclosed spaces reflect a character's internal manifestations of the external world under patriarchy. The protagonists of the films interact with physical space, but this space appears differently over time. The homes of the protagonists, and the protagonists themselves, become increasingly *unheimlich* over the course of each film. As the enclosed setting continues to betray the lead characters, and their homes become more and more *unheimlich*, Carole, Rosemary, and Trelkovsky each become more certain of their delusional, possibly even hallucinatory convictions, until finally they are silenced, defeated by patriarchy.

Repulsion

In *Repulsion*, the first of the Apartment Trilogy, schizophrenic Carole transgresses the traditional gendered behavior that would be expected of a character such as hers prior to second-wave feminism. She is living as a foreigner in a shared apartment with her sister in London and working in a spa. She is conventionally attractive and receives a significant amount of male attention. However, she suffers from androphobia, and is repulsed by masculine disturbances, even as slight as the presence of her sister's boyfriend in the apartment. When her sister and her boyfriend go on vacation and leave her alone in the apartment, her mental condition steadily declines and she seeks solitary refuge by locking herself in the apartment. As her refuge is

⁴² Williams, Linda. "Film Madness: The Uncanny Return of the Repressed in Polanski's 'The Tenant.'" *Cinema Journal*, 1981. 67.

threatened, her disgust towards men and her mental illness lead her into delirium, culminating in a murderous spree.

It is apparent that Carole views any association with men as a violation early on when she becomes nauseated by her sister's boyfriend's belongings in their shared bathroom. Soon after, she is terrified when she walks into the bathroom while he is in there. As per *Poetics of Space*, the bathroom is connected to purification, and as such, the presence of a man taints it.⁴³

Carole's home begins to transform into the uncanny after her sister and her boyfriend leave for Italy. She begins experiencing intense rape nightmares and their apartment becomes uncanny when Carole is unable to differentiate between her delusions and reality. The delusions are shown by cracks in the wall of her apartment. Her internal anxieties project onto the apartment itself—the wall cracks and becomes less rigid, allowing numerous hands to protrude into the apartment and attempt to grab her. Carole's delusions are clearly delineated from reality in the diegesis of *Repulsion*, both through obvious hallucinations that follow her through her apartment⁴⁴—the walls that crack and arms that protrude from them—and also through perceptual distortions that occur in various rooms of the apartment. In one scene, Carole is still in bed looking at the light above her and suddenly appears to be float towards her bedroom ceiling above her “as the perspective of the shot shifts radically.”⁴⁵

Each violation of Carole's space in the film, such as a visit from her persistent suitor and later her predatory landlord, both of whom she murders, contribute to her intensifying delusions. Her delusions are embodied by the apartment itself, which reconstructs itself with the assistance of a modifiable set, widening focal lens, and low shots. These techniques are demonstrated after the first murder, when:

“she wanders through the flat's corridor, which has now become extremely elongated, towards the bathroom. As she enters the bathroom, we see a severely distorted room in which her body takes on gigantic proportions and the bathtub appears to be much

⁴³ Bachelard (1964).

⁴⁴ Triggs (2006), 22.

⁴⁵ Caputo (2012), 155.

further away than we know it should be, an effect most likely achieved through the construction of an ‘Ames’-type set combined with the use of a telephoto lens.”^{46, 47}

The cracks in the walls symbolize the perils of the outside world and they, along with her nightmares of rape and the unwanted visits by men, ensure Carole “cannot keep her virginal, female-oriented world free from the taint of the men circling around her.”⁴⁸ The delusions become more frequent and fervent with each murder—Carole’s attempts to avoid her oppressors are futile as her home continues to fail to protect her.

In *Repulsion*, as with each film in the Apartment Trilogy, the ending asserts the dominance of patriarchy with the protagonist succumbing to her oppressor. The film ends with Carole lying under her sister’s bed in a catatonic state, the other tenants are all staring at her. Her situation comes full circle as she is ironically carried away by her sister’s boyfriend, the first male she expresses repulsion towards in the film, who acts as though he has saved her.

Rosemary’s Baby

Rosemary’s Baby begins with Rosemary and her husband, Guy, moving into a new apartment in New York City. They quickly become friendly with their next door neighbors, the Castevets. Rosemary grows apprehensive of them, while Guy continues to include them in their lives nonetheless. Initially, Rosemary is content in her marriage. She and Guy are sexually active and she happily stays alone at home decorating while he looks for work. The relationship grows less positive the more the Castevets involve themselves in their lives. It becomes clear that Rosemary has little control in her daily life, and, even more troublingly, over her own body. Guy pressures her to eat a dessert brought by the Castevets, and she is raped by him while unconscious afterwards. The Castevets become omnipresent after Rosemary becomes pregnant that night. As they continue to violate Rosemary’s space, she changes her appearance and becomes delusional—strongly believing that the Castevets are Satanists with whom her husband

⁴⁶ Caputo (2012), 105.

⁴⁷ Ames rooms and sets are created based on the idea that human brains have knowledge of what the dimensions of rooms and space should be, and this knowledge of how space should appear creates perceptual crises when presented with rooms that do not match these expectations. See Caputo (2012), pg. 154.

⁴⁸ McDonald, Tamar Jeffer. *Virgin Territory: Representing Sexual Inexperience in Film*. Wayne State University Press, 2010. 142.

is conspiring, and so she is pregnant with the spawn of Satan. Her efforts to gain autonomy over her situation are fruitless and she ends up giving birth in the care of Guy and the Casteverts.

As close-up shots reveal, as Rosemary becomes more wary of her intrusive neighbors, her world becomes claustrophobic, and she becomes distressed to the point of seeming delusional. As the Casteverts continue to intrude in Rosemary's life and in her dreams, her sanity declines. Their voices constantly carry over to her apartment, and she has difficulty thwarting their advances. The apartment in *Rosemary's Baby* is *unheimlich* in its failure to afford privacy and protection from the Casteverts and Guy, and therefore from patriarchal society. The Casteverts represent patriarchy through their large role in promoting the mainstream familial structure of *Rosemary's Baby*—they are both responsible for Rosemary's pregnancy as well as the acting success that Guy experiences, placing them directly in their patriarchal roles in the domestic sphere and the workforce respectively.

The apartment of *Rosemary's Baby* fosters the “slippage between waking and dreaming” through long takes that lead the audience to believe reality “continues out of the frame.”⁴⁹ After a neighbor's suicide, Rosemary lies in bed napping and the Casteverts' voices become a part of her dream. The camera tilts upwards to the ceiling wall where a nun and children are shown with no explanation. Continuous camera movement makes it ambiguous as to whether or not this is a dream or reality. Later, the second dream sequence is a nightmare in which Rosemary is raped by a demonic being in front of Guy, the Casteverts, and other tenants. Here, the line between fantasy and reality is delineated more surely through the use of a fisheye lens and gothic imagery.

Unlike in *Repulsion*, where no personal aesthetic transformation delineates Carole's immersion into the uncanny, Rosemary herself also transforms. Although pregnant, her face appears more gaunt, she cuts her hair into a pixie cut, one that was considered boyish, and she becomes quite pale. Guy criticizes her appearance, and her efforts to take control of her own life are rendered ineffective.

⁴⁹ McCullough (2016).

Rosemary's Baby draws attention to the struggles of pregnancy, and even implies that pregnancy and childbirth could be undesirable. Though supernatural, this was a controversial viewpoint for mainstream media to present. Thus, *Rosemary's Baby* “may also reflect the emerging feminist movement in North America (and Europe) in the late 60s... the mother-monster alignment of *Rosemary's Baby* may also suggest the magnitude of the threat of empowerment offered by the women's movement at the time i.e. beyond the reproductive realm.”⁵⁰ Departure from an idyllic view of a nuclear family attacks the patriarchy/status quo; however, in the end Rosemary accepts her child, despite her intentions to reject the Castevets and Guy's patriarchal control, symbolized by Satan. In the closing sequence, she demonstrates newfound submissiveness when she takes the baby into her own hands. She accepts her patriarchal role as mother of the devil's spawn—a child that came from her own body, of which her attempts to take ownership were thwarted time and time again. The film presents Rosemary as mentally unstable and impulsive until the end, which strongly suggests a need for patriarchy and traditional family roles.

The Tenant

The Tenant also focuses on a protagonist that is Othered in society. Trelkovsky, an Eastern European immigrant in Paris, rents an apartment previously belonging to a woman named Simone Choule, who attempted suicide by jumping out of the window. He is treated with hostility from his neighbors and immediately feels unwelcome in his new home. As time goes on, he experiences outright paranoia towards the other tenants of the building. He loses his grasp on reality and begins to identify more and more with Simone. He begins cross-dressing and is surprised by his own appearance on multiple occasions, making it difficult to interpret during which points he is and is not lucid. Eventually, his paranoia becomes so extreme that he is convinced his neighbors are out to kill him and his transformation into Simone comes full circle when he attempts suicide from the same apartment window.

⁵⁰ Berenstein (1990), 67.

Like *Repulsion* and *Rosemary's Baby*, “the horror tradition in *The Tenant* offers a reduced, urban version of the classic haunted house-the haunted apartment.”⁵¹ Although the architecture itself does transform, it is Trelkovsky’s own transformation that is most uncanny. As he becomes more paranoid that his neighbors are malignant towards him, he spends more time in his apartment, and more time feminizing himself, through cross-dressing and wearing make-up. This disturbs him and his mental distress correlates with his transformation into Simone. His gradual succumbing to feminization is presented as uncanny and is paralleled by changes in his apartment. At first his apartment appears to be small and claustrophobic, however, similarly to Carole’s apartment, it transforms as he becomes more mentally unstable, signaling his “decreasing ability to perceive effectively.”⁵² Specifically, the camera work allows Trelkovsky to shrink as his apartment grows larger:

“As in *Repulsion*, Polanski uses a type of Ames Room... At first, the room appears to be perfectly normal, just as we have seen it previously... as Trelkovsky begins to penetrate the space its nature becomes distorted... As Trelkovsky walks forward, so too is the camera drawn forward to follow; but with every step his dimensions reduce compared to the objects that surround him, which seem to grow as Trelkovsky is increasingly ‘dwarfed’ by the room. The time it takes for him to reach the window is likewise extended, reflecting the now-increased length of his path.”⁵³

This dwarfing of Trelkovsky within Simone’s former apartment, surrounded by her things, suggests that he is becoming more encapsulated in her world and his own former identity is shrinking.

Because Trelkovsky appears delusional in his growing identification with Simone, the feminine behavior that he exhibits can be seen as a reaction to second-wave feminism, conveniently correlating the character’s adoption of feminine traits to mental illness. His cross-

⁵¹ Williams (1981), 66.

⁵² Caputo (2012), 159.

⁵³ Caputo (2012), 154.

dressings is not presented as a valid preference or incidental amusement. Rather, it is strictly due to his delusion of becoming the former apartment tenant, Simone Choule.

The Tenant also alludes to Jacques Lacan's theory of a mirror stage, which occurs when an individual first recognizes their own reflection and are shocked by their discovery. Doubles appear often in *The Tenant*, as Trelkovsky sees himself as a woman through windows and mirrors, and is shocked by his appearance. This jolt reflects a conflict between one's acknowledgment of their own physicality and their lived experience. For Lacan, this conflict is tied to alienation—the predominant experience catalyzing Trelkovsky's mental decline.⁵⁴

In each film of the Apartment trilogy, the personal sphere becomes a trap—Carole's apartment does not prevent the outside world from protruding inside of it, Rosemary is unable to keep the Castevets from her apartment, and Trelkovsky's expanding apartment entraps him within himself and his increasing affinity with Simone Choule. The concluding scene of *The Tenant* is the most jarring and is where the reassertion of the need of patriarchy is realized. Trelkovsky entirely commits to his gradual likening to Simone, the woman whose apartment he moved into after her suicide, and finally attempts suicide himself, alluding that there is no place in patriarchy for such an Other.

⁵⁴ Evans, Dylan. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. Routledge, 2006.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Reasserting the Patriarchy

Bachelard describes the house as a human's first world: "Life begins well, it begins enclosed, protected, all warm in the bosom of the house."⁵⁵ The violations of the protagonists at home, and the transformation of the home into the architectural uncanny make the violations all the more intense. This transition into the uncanny parallels the struggle the lead characters face to resist the patriarchy. In their delusions, they are forced to confront and submit to their own realities under patriarchy.

The interference of the uncanny enforces the lead characters' realities under patriarchy that they so desperately sought to escape to no avail. Whether or not the uncanny is self-imposed, it is a vehicle that forces the lead characters to either succumb to the patriarchal order or to have no possible place in it. The becoming uncanny of their homes mirrors their own internal struggle to accept or understand their place in society.

Enclosed settings betray the protagonists time and time again as they fail to protect them from their fears. Their homes turn on them—Carole's by allowing men's hands to protrude through the walls and grope her, Rosemary's through the ambiguity of reality and delusion, and Trelkovsky's by enlarging itself and making him smaller inside of it—demonstrates the power and pervasiveness of the patriarchy. This is the greatest evidence of each lead character's disenfranchisement—they lack autonomy even in their own homes.

In the Apartment Trilogy, we see the true intention of patriarchy—the house is to be a space of safety from the outside world—except, of course, from the patriarchy itself. We witness the mental collapse of three vulnerable protagonists who desperately try to resist the patriarchy but are unable to win. They are increasingly deranged until finally rendered entirely submissive. The ending of each film ultimately reinstates and justifies the patriarchy because the protagonists

⁵⁵ Bachelard (1964), 7.

are depicted as people who need patriarchy to protect themselves and/or society. They either die tragic deaths or become complacent and complicit in the systems that they were fighting.

Audience Spectatorship

The betrayal of the protagonists of the Apartment Trilogy by their enclosed settings is twofold: first by the world of the film and secondly, by reality as we, the audience of the film, spectators outside of the world of the film, look in. Film allows the audience the unique opportunity to be privy to a character's intimate moments as sole viewers. In all three films, the protagonists have been betrayed by architecture— both in the world of the film and outside, in the theater, as the audience observes their private realm. For each film in the Apartment Trilogy, the audience witnesses behaviors and actions unbeknownst to other characters in the film, including the protagonists themselves. This spectatorship is cruel for the director to impose on the lead characters of the films, and in a way the audience is complicit in the violations of Carole, Rosemary, and Trelkovsky. This is the ultimate invasion of privacy for the protagonists, as all protagonists are uncomfortable being observed, especially in *The Tenant* with Trelkovsky's paranoia and *Repulsion* with Carole's androphobia. The Apartment Trilogy is a demonstration of control of the societally vulnerable. The way that their autonomy is attacked in the diegesis is paralleled in the non-diegetic presence of the audience.

The audience receives resolution in that the tales of Carole, Rosemary, and Trelkovsky, are over—they are silenced, for better or for worse. The sense of resolution that comes with the ending of each film, ambiguous or not, is the triumphant moment of the patriarchy. In this sense of resolution, the patriarchy has managed to silence the societally burdensome Others of the Apartment Trilogy. Because the protagonists break the conventions of traditional femininity, many viewers believe that the trilogy has feminist undertones. However, in the denouement of each film, it is clear that the protagonist's repudiation of social norms must be punished and that they no longer have a place in society, unless they succumb to the control of the patriarchy.

The Modern Home and the Female Body

In the Apartment Trilogy, most specifically in *Repulsion* and *Rosemary's Baby*, the apartments inhabited by the protagonists themselves become metonyms for sexual violence and

are metaphors for women's bodies. In both *Repulsion* and *Rosemary's Baby* "the transgression of the architectural edge—the wall, the floor, the way—holds the threat of the violation of the edge of their bodies. The films deal with fear of penetration writ large, written on the architecture of the interior and the architecture of the cities in which the films' action takes place: London and New York."⁵⁶

Throughout history, houses have been linked to the feminine sphere. The lead character's of the Apartment Trilogy specifically seek out these feminine spheres for protection and fear of the world outside of them. Because houses have historically been attributed to the "womb," this speaks to a desire for the mother, which Lacan describes as the primordial desire.⁵⁷ More recently, the modern "cube" house (apartments) became symbolic of masculinity.⁵⁸ The architecture of the 1960s is marked by Brutalism, which deconstructed the idea of separation between the interior and exterior of buildings.⁵⁹ Therefore, it is not surprising that masculine, Brutalist houses (apartments) are unable to protect women from patriarchy in the Apartment Trilogy.

Thus, "*Repulsion* and *Rosemary's Baby* are the story of the vengeance of the interior. In both, the difference between inside and outside refuses to disappear, and the interior aggressively reasserts itself."⁶⁰ Informed by ideological interpretations of the house and by Brutalism, this extends the interpretation that the Apartment Trilogy is also a critique on modern living.

The Messenger is the Message

Returning to Freud's writings on the uncanny, *heimlich*, refers to "what is familiar and agreeable," and uncanny, "what is concealed and kept out of sight."⁶¹ Polanski's Apartment Trilogy explores: what happens when the uncanny gains visibility? Women had not before been at the forefront of society—not in film nor occupation. The Apartment Trilogy threatened this in

⁵⁶ Shonfield, Katherine. *Walls Have Feelings: Architecture, Film and the City*. Routledge, 2003. 55.

⁵⁷ Lacan, Jacques. *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan: Book VII*. Routledge, 2013.

⁵⁸ Schmidt (2001), 106.

⁵⁹ Shonfield (2003), 56.

⁶⁰ Shonfield (2003), 56.

⁶¹ Freud (1919).

both the world of the film and outside of the film by virtue of feminine lead characters, a novelty at the time. These feminine characters push the boundaries of the conventions of femininity, causing them to experience the uncanny, and instability. Instability increases with the visibility of the uncanny in the characters and apartments of the Apartment Trilogy and the patriarchy is presented as the only solution.

The conclusion of the patriarchy being reasserted in the Apartment Trilogy is supported by Polanski's controversial history and character. He is a convicted rapist of a minor, who has attributed the attention he has received for this to his fame, stating that these actions are commonplace and only brought into the public light when involving someone of high social stature.⁶² This attitude avoids repentance for his actions, which by today's standards are considered highly violent. In today's mainstream culture, Polanski is not revered: "only a man of his violent and erotic imagination could have arrived at its queasy incarnations of sexual disgust."⁶³ The topic of whether artwork that is attached to abusers should be readily consumed, much less revered is heavily speculated upon, as is the question of whether men can accurately depict the experiences of women in film.⁶⁴

"Film is a mirror of the world, therefore, when women in film change then women in life change."⁶⁵ Polanski, and other male directors, have utilized feminine protagonists in their films in order to control the perception of women in the world outside of the film and mitigate the changing culture of burgeoning female empowerment in light of second-wave Feminism. Mulvey argues that in order for women to reclaim their image in film, it is vital for them to control their own image.⁶⁶ In other words, films about women directed by women provide less problematic representations of women.⁶⁷ Polanski's Apartment Trilogy supports that men are not

⁶² Polanski (2005).

⁶³ Michael Sragow, "Repulsion," Criterion Collection, January 07, 1991.

⁶⁴ See Dederer's "What Do We Do with the Art of Monstrous Men?" (2017) and Rachman's "Why We Still Romanticize Artists Who Behaved Terribly" (2018).

⁶⁵ Chaudhuri (2006), 22.

⁶⁶ Mulvey (1989).

⁶⁷ An example of such a film is Chantal Akerman's *Jeanne Dielman, 23 quai du Commerce, 1080 Bruxelles* (1975).

able to accurately portray women on screen because he uses femininity to demonstrate the need for patriarchy, something that today is widely argued as untrue.

Polanski as a Woman

It is worth speculating upon the fact that Polanski did not only direct *The Tenant*, but also plays the lead character, Trelkovsky. *The Tenant* was the first film released upon his exile after being convicted of rape in the United States. How does a director convicted of rape, who has shown rape and sexual violence in *Repulsion* and *Rosemary's Baby*, figure himself a suicidal female and a schizophrenic? Does he desire to be a woman? Is he projecting his own curiosity about the *unheimlich*? Is he trying to regain a sympathetic image of himself?

It is without doubt that Polanski can relate to Trelkovsky as an outsider in society, and the paranoia he carried with him post-WWII.⁶⁸ However, in *The Tenant* is he imagining his outsider experience to be similar to the experiences of women post-WWII? Is he comparing feeling like an outsider to the uncanny?

Trelkovsky becoming his opposite in Simone Choule provides Polanski the opportunity to also become his opposite. This is reminiscent of Gilles Deleuze's interpretation of identity as not so much defined by the self as it is by lack of self—in other words, self is understood by its opposite.⁶⁹ Could this mean that Polanski is compelled to better understand himself as oppressor in identifying with those that he has oppressed? Is this a display of remorse?

In one scene of *The Tenant*, Trelkovsky looks out the window, only to see himself looking back at him, “most haunted... by what we would most like to forget.”⁷⁰ Perhaps in *The Tenant*, Polanski is feeling just that.

⁶⁸ Polanski (1985).

⁶⁹ Deleuze, Gilles. *Desert Islands and other texts*. Semiotext, 2004. 32.

⁷⁰ Williams (1981), 67.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

It is neither the psychological ideas presented in the films, nor the experience of terror when the homes become *unheimlich* alone, that render Polanski's Apartment Trilogy a reassertion of patriarchal values. When these ideas are evaluated with Polanski's personal history of violent sexual assault, perceptions of women and mental illness of the time, taking into consideration *who* Polanski is forming these psychological studies on, we can understand these films as appropriations of the Other, silencing the Other from claiming their own experience.

In the 1960s and 1970s, women were empowered through Second-wave feminism, and attempts by media to mitigate this empowerment were rampant. Mental health, which is still stigmatized today, was more intensely stigmatized and less understood. Polanski's Apartment Trilogy overlaps and extends beyond the film noir era post World War II. This era was heavily marked by a return to conservative family values in cinema. Women were seldom lead characters in film, and when so, they were generally portrayed as dangerous and societally burdensome. This is the case in Polanski's *Repulsion*—Carole is a murderer. Rosemary is not so much a threat to society as she is unable to control her situation, demonstrating the need for patriarchy to protect the “feeble female.” Trelkovsky as a character further renders the feminine as incompetent without patriarchal protection—his feminization corresponds to the loss of a grasp on reality and his ultimate suicide.

This paper is relevant today with the social movements of our time—Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, and LGBTQIA rights to name a few. These social groups have received significant attention in the news and in Hollywood—it is important to address how films may promote or demote these movements, and how they may control public opinion of disenfranchised individuals.

CHAPTER 7

FUTURE WORK

Enclosed settings as a motif in cinema extend beyond the Apartment Trilogy, and are still used today. In 2017, we saw enclosed settings in *Get Out* (2017), a horror film that satirized the current era of “post-racism” in suburban America. To analyze the Apartment Trilogy, the mainstream definition of patriarchy is adequate because it was released while women’s issues were at the forefront, however, this definition is no longer sufficient. Emerging feminist film criteria that better address intersectionality will provide a basis for analysis of recent films which also use enclosed spaces and react to third-wave feminism.

This paper also questions who should be making films with respect to authorship versus subject matter. The LGBTQIA-community has labelled movies like *Blue is the Warmest Color* (2013) and *Call Me By Your Name* (2017)—both directed by cisgender heterosexual men—as inaccurate in their portrayal of LGBTQIA romance, in part also because the lead actors are non-members of the community. The films are criticized as being co-opted by heterosexuals who appropriate and profit from a community to which neither the director nor the actors belong. Many people responded positively to *Get Out* because the perspective of a Black male was written and directed and portrayed on screen by a Black male.

Further, lack of representation on- and off-screen reveals structural issues in Hollywood. There is a pay gap between genders, and fewer women, people of color, and LGBTQIA individuals are in positions of executive power and on production teams. In future work, I expect researchers to provide in-depth analysis of where to go from here regarding filmmaking, both on-screen and behind-the-camera. Film scholars must continue to highlight the connection between the personal and the political in film and in our society, and to challenge the entertainment industry to engage seriously with these topics and feature a diversity of voices.

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